Somali-African American conflict in Linden:
Postcolonial Realities and the Implications for Radical Democracy

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by

Christopher Riley

The Ohio State University
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Project Adviser: Nancy Ettlinger, Department of Geography

"They live in the same neighborhood. They share the same skin color. They were expected to get along. But they didn't" (Latta 2003).

This is the first line of a newspaper article that ran in the Columbus Dispatch on June 6, 2003. "They" are low-income African Americans and Somalis; the "neighborhood" is Linden (on the northeast side of Columbus, Ohio); the "skin color" is black; and the expectation that "they" would "get along" came from Columbus non-governmental organization (NGO) and government officers responsible for diversity management. The conflict implied in the quote persists (Latta 2003, personal interview with local journalist, 12/07/04; personal interview with African American Linden school counselor, 03/09/05).

Context

In the mid-1990's, Somali refugees took advantage of the opportunity to migrate to the United States after having fled from their native country's civil war. Since immigration, more than 30,000 Somalis have migrated to Columbus (personal interview with Somali NGO worker, 02/16/04). Upon resettlement, local NGO workers led Somalis to settle in public housing projects in Linden, a predominantly low-income African American neighborhood (personal interview with city/NGO complex official, 02/07/04). Over the next few years, tensions began mounting between low-income African American residents and Somali newcomers (personal interview with local journalist, 12/07/04; personal interview with city/NGO official, 04/11/05; personal interview with African American minister, 10/13/04). In 1998, these tensions mounted into physical fighting between Somali and low-income African American residents in public housing facilities and public schools (personal interview with local journalist, 12/07/04; personal interview with city/NGO official, 04/11/05).

The city/NGO complex of decision makers[1] (henceforth, I will refer to the city/NGO complex of decision makers as the "city/NGO complex") diagnosed the primary cause of the conflict without adequately consulting Somalis or low-income African Americans involved with the conflict. Only the middle-class and predominantly male "leaders" of each community were consulted, not those directly involved with the conflict (personal interview with middle-class African American male, 12/01/04; personal interview with member of city/NGO official, 04/11/05; focus group with Somali women 01/24/05). The city/NGO complex assumed that the African American and Somali communities were homogenous and cohesive and that the primary cause of the conflict must be a misunderstanding of differences in one another's group-specific behaviors (personal interview with city/NGO official, 01/21/04). More specifically, the city/NGO complex believed that African Americans started the conflict and that Somali aggression was primarily retaliating (personal interview with city/NGO official, 01/21/04). Furthermore, it was believed that this conflict would be temporary, assuming that Somali's would assimilate into African American culture, thereby eliminating differences (personal interview with city/NGO official, 01/21/04).

To catalyze a peaceful resolution, local NGOs such as the United Way, Somali Women's and Children's Alliance, and the Urban League created an initiative known as "Project Brotherhood" following the first outbreak of conflict in 1998 with a $35,000 grant from United Way to pay personnel and rent space (Latta 2003, personal interview with city/NGO official, 01/21/04; personal interview with local journalist, 12/07/04 Interview). This initiative focused on uniting African Americans and Somalis in public housing projects (Latta 2003, personal

[1] The city's relationship with the NGOs is interesting, but not central to understanding issues surrounding the conflict. Basically, the city utilizes the NGOs as a knowledge bank. When the conflict broke out, city officials consulted NGO workers to gain an understanding of what was happening (personal interview with city/NGO official, 01/21/04). The city then included some of the NGOs in the decision making process. These NGOs were then responsible for implementing these policies.

interview with local journalist, 12/07/04). Project Brotherhood was a three-step process that attempted to teach African Americans and Somalis about one another (personal interview with city/NGO official, 02/26/04). The first step involved an African American speaker, who taught a group of Somalis about the plight of African Americans in the United States. The second step involved a Somali speaker teaching African Americans about Somalis. The final step attempted to coordinate an integrated discussion group involving the same Somalis and African Americans from steps one and two. *Despite such efforts, conflict continues in Linden in public schools and public housing projects* (Narcisco 2004, personal interview with Somali woman, 11/15/04; personal interview with African American Linden school counselor, 03/09/05).

Purpose & Methods

The persistence of the African American-Somali conflict suggests problems with the city/NGO complex's diagnosis and their policy solutions. Presumably, if the city had correctly diagnosed the problem and prescribed the correct solution, then the conflict would have abated. The purpose of this paper is to explore the failures of governance in Columbus to reinterpret the problem, and to suggest an alternative course of action based on a re-presentation of the issues. This paper answers the following questions: If the city/NGO complex has misdiagnosed the problem, then what is the cause of the conflict? Why was the city/NGO complex's diagnosis wrong? What changes should be made in governance to prevent misdiagnosis of important problems? Under what conditions are such changes viable?

Answering these questions requires a combination of primary and secondary research. In January 2004, I began primary research for this project. The Ohio State University Honors and Scholars program, the college of Arts and Sciences Honors, and Undergraduate Student Government funded my field research. Beginning with local publications (newspapers and local magazines), I gathered information on the location of the conflict occurring between low-income

African Americans and Somalis. I then traveled to these locations to meet people and gather primary data pertaining to the issues surrounding the conflict and the nature of Somali resettlement to Columbus.

Field research entailed participant observation, focus groups. and unstructured interviews with members of the Somali and low-income African American community (I focused on a range of members from each community to gain an understanding of any potential intra-community gender and/or class differences), local journalists, NGO's, academicians, school workers, city officials, and others. I conducted participant observation at Somali and low-income African American businesses to get a general impression of community strength and cohesion and entrepreneurship in each community. My specific participation in these businesses involved buying goods and interacting to the fullest extent possible with those around me. In Somali settings, this would sometimes involve hour-long talks with store owners who were eager to discuss a variety of topics ranging from their personal entrepreneurial activities to the plight of their families throughout the Somali civil war. This sort of extensive interaction rarely occurred in low-income African American businesses. This relative lack of interaction with African Americans exists because of the expectations of the different business owners. As one Somali pointed out: "The only White Americans that come in here are the ones that are curious to know about Somalis" (personal interview with Somali male business owner, 03/18/05). However, "White Americans" that come into African American owned businesses rarely enter for a "cultural experience," but just to conduct quick, convenient business (i.e. get a haircut, buy a pack of cigarettes, etc.) (participant observation at African American owned business). In either case, it is rare for White Americans to enter whether for business or cultural experience at many of these businesses. Questions that I asked myself before, during, and after interviews included: Were the people in these places behaving naturally, or behaving differently given my presence as a Caucasian in their workspace? How differently did they behave due to my presence?

Though the participant observation was essential to various aspects of my study, I conducted no participant observation in schools and residences where the fighting occurred for three reasons. First, school officials were hesitant and preferred that I spend little time in the school as an observer. Second, residents seemed nervous at my presence near their homes. Third, I could gather the information I needed through participant observation at local businesses and NGO's. Indeed, I encountered the Somalis and low-income African Americans that live in Linden at the local businesses.

Beyond participant observation, I conducted 52 interviews. These interviews ranged from 15 minutes to three hours in length. I conducted interviews with a variety of audiences (members of the Somali and African American community, local journalists, NGO's, academicians, school workers, city officials, and others) to include a multiplicity of voices. The interviews complemented the participant observation in a number of ways. First, although participant observation allowed me to understand general differences between the two communities based on my interpretation, interviews allowed the Somalis and African Americans to speak for themselves. Furthermore, interviews highlighted the thoughts and feelings of those not involved in the conflict (i.e. journalists, ministers, middle-class African Americans, members of the city/NGO complex, etc.). Therefore, interviews served as a way to highlight people's perceptions of the conflict and to gather narratives from people's varying perspectives of the conflict.

I conducted focus groups (five) when data gathered from interviews indicated that my research might benefit from a focus group. This happened in two instances. When I conducted interviews at an NGO, it would occasionally become apparent that workers performed individual, discrete tasks that led to a collective task. In interviews with members of such an NGO, a common answer to a question would be something like: "I don't know, you'd have to ask Barb, she's in charge of that." Under these circumstances, when possible, I would set up a

focus group and ask general questions to a group of NGO workers to understand the goals of the NGO and the workers collective thoughts and feelings on the communities that they were trying to help. I conducted three focus groups with NGOs.

I conducted the other two focus groups with Somalis. Most members of the Somali community gather and disseminate news about activities in the Somali community through group discussions on the lawns of residences and in the local businesses (participant observation at Somali-owned businesses). This facilitates for gathering potential Somali interviewees together into a focus group simple. One focus group was conducted with six non-English speaking Somali women; a Somali man translated. The other focus group was conducted with a number[2] of Somali men, mostly English speaking business owners. The English speakers would translate for the non-English speakers throughout the focus group. In these focus groups, I would ask a few questions about the conflict and about African Americans and listen to the Somalis talk among themselves and to me about their thoughts and feelings.

I conducted no focus groups with Linden's low-income African Americans. Though I felt that a focus group with African Americans was beneficial (such a focus group would have shown how Linden's African Americans talk about Somalis and the conflict while conversing amongst themselves), such a focus group did not materialize. This does not indicate a personal failure, but rather it informs my research: though I put the same amount of effort as I did to organizing a focus group with Somalis (if not more) into organizing a focus group with African Americans, I landed no focus group. This shows that the Somali community is more cohesive than the African-American community in Linden. For most of my African American contacts that share a sense of community, community/family time happens on Sundays after church (personal interview with African American female Linden resident, 09/20/04). Most of the

[2] I do not have an exact number here. I began the focus group in a Somali business with five participants. Others would come join in or leave the discussion throughout. The discussion lasted 90 minutes, and three of the original participants stayed for the duration while a total of eight Somali men contributed and while approximately five others stopped by to listen but contributed nothing other than their presence to the focus group.

African Americans with family ties explained that their family bonds are strong, but expressed concern that they did not get to spend as much time with family and friends as they would prefer. Therefore, family time was a special and relatively rare occasion that they were unwilling to share. By contrast, the African Americans that had weak or no family ties described the African American community as fragmented (personal interview with African American male Linden resident, 11/02/04). In short, this meant there were no apparent windows of opportunity for conducting a focus group through these interviewees.

These three methods worked together to re-present the narratives of Somali immigration, African American marginalization, and the Somali-African American conflict. Participant observation provided an on-the-ground view of the Somali and African American communities in Linden by permitting a general assessment of community strength and cohesion. Interviews provided the inclusion of a multiplicity of narratives from the city/NGO complex, journalists, and members of these communities, thus giving this paper multiple perspectives of the Linden area. Focus groups then allowed the Somali community to define itself. The interrelation between these three methods provides a multidimensional look at both of these communities, how others perceive them, the needs of these communities, and the reasons for conflict.

Developing an alternative framework

As previously mentioned, if the city/NGO complex had correctly diagnosed the problem and prescribed the right policy solution, then fighting would not persist. Indeed, data gathered during field research supports the claim that the city/NGO complex's perspective may be off base. Therefore, an alternative framework is necessary to challenge the city/NGO complex's assumptions and provide a new frame of reference for policy implementation.

Assumption: Misunderstanding one another's group-specific behaviors caused the conflict

The city/NGO complex made the assumption that a misunderstanding of one another's group-specific behaviors caused the conflict. As previously stated, the city/NGO complex made

this assumption without adequately consulting African Americans or Somalis involved with the conflict. To understand the cause of the conflict requires going to Linden and talking to African Americans and Somalis involved in the conflict. Here, revised postcolonial/postdevelopment literatures are helpful to understand how the city/NGO complex misdiagnosed the cause of the conflict.

Revised postcolonial/postdevelopment literatures are an offshoot of traditional postcolonialism. Traditional postcolonialism, popularized by Edward Said (1979) (in reference to the Middle East) and Arturo Escobar (2000) (in reference to Latin America), focuses on deconstructing accepted views of history by introducing the perspectives of the subaltern, or the formerly colonized people. Said and Escobar recognize the effect discourse has on material realities and are concerned with how it is that current accepted discourses[3] of history are one-dimensional and "Western." On the ground, such an understanding of history leads dominant groups to colonize and neocolonize "Third World" countries through a development discourse that is void of local knowledges[4] (Nanda 1999). Therefore, a traditional postcolonialist would argue that it becomes necessary to recognize history from the vantage point of the subaltern to make discourses of history multidimensional and to open up opportunities for inclusion of the subaltern in decision making processes (Said 1979, Prakash 1992, etc).

By contrast, revised postcolonialism does not share this spatial/temporal specificity. For example, revised postcolonialism does not only view the subaltern as the formerly colonized, but as marginalized groups in any place (Lubiano 1991, Hanchard 1990, Stoler 1989). Therefore, one can view the Somalis and African Americans in Linden with a postcolonial lens.

[3] An accepted discourse is a discourse that decision-makers utilize to create policy.
[4] Or the idea that since people in these countries cannot think well enough for themselves (otherwise they would not be in the poor economic conditions they are in), then the Westerners must think for them. Therefore, "local knowledge" (or the thoughts, feelings, and know-how of the people in Third World countries) will be ignored in favor of the analyses of the Westerners.

Furthermore, revised postcolonialists recognize difference across multiple axes; broadening the scope of research to gender, race, etc.[5], not just difference in nationality (Mohanty 1991, Carby 1986).

Conversations with Linden's African Americans reveal that the cause of the conflict is more than a misunderstanding of group-specific differences. The contrast between their longstanding marginalization and the early entrepreneurial success of the Somalis (evident by the two incubator business malls that serve approximately 100 Somali-owned businesses in Linden) fuels the frustration felt by many of Linden's African Americans (participant observation, personal interview with Somali business owner, 11/13/04). As one African American man put it: "We've been here for 400 years and haven't gotten a break yet. They got a break after just a decade" (personal interview with African American male Linden resident, 03/08/04). Implicit within this quote is the idea that many of Linden's African Americans believe Somalis are getting money from the government. City officials have denied these claims (personal interview with city/NGO official, 04/11/05).

Local NGOs provide start-up capital for businesses to refugees that the city matches dollar for dollar; African Americans do not have access to these funds because African Americans are not refugees (Personal interview with local journalist, 12/07/04; Focus group with NGO, 1/26/05). The City/NGO complex helps to fund Somali businesses in which there are now over 200 in Columbus, and the African Americans want a piece of the pie (Personal interview with Somali male community leader, 01/19/05). The city/NGO complex's response to the African Americans' demand -- to challenge the African American view that Somali's have access to capital that African Americans do not -- misses the point that African Americans want

[5] Thus, based on my interpretation, revised postcolonialism encompasses any work focused on providing voice directly to a 'subaltern' group, whether the work is feminist, focused on race, ethnicity, nationality, etc.

access to start-up capital and that structural reasons exist that prevent African Americans from gaining access.

One structural reason that prevents African Americans from gaining access is the difference in the kind of aid offered to African Americans versus the kind of aid offered to Somali refugees. Although there have been urban policies focused on providing economic resources to low-income African Americans (government-sponsored programs focused on bussing people to jobs or on providing incentives to firms to locate in low-income areas to counter spatial mismatch are two such examples), these efforts were/are centered around providing African Americans with low-wage jobs working for others (Mueller and Schwartz 1998). From the African American perspective, the Somalis are getting the better deal (personal interview with African American male Linden resident, 03/08/04).

Another structural barrier is welfare dependency, or a dependence on the state for sustenance. Linden's African American population has fallen into this common trap (welfare dependency) (Cruse 1987, personal interview with African American minister, 10/20/04). Linden's low-income African Americans expressed a concern that they face few options: low-wage jobs in the formal economy (which is the extent of the workfare aid provided to African Americans as mentioned above) OR be on welfare AND/OR take part in informal economic activity (i.e. panhandling, theft, selling drugs, buying/selling collectible goods on auction websites such as E-bay, gambling, and creating/building and selling arts/crafts and other goods) (personal interview with City/NGO complex official, 02/26/04; personal interview with African American minister, 10/13/04; personal interview with African American female Linden resident, 02/10/04). Since cannot have a formal job and be on welfare, Linden's African Americans that

are eligible for welfare[6] can attempt hold a formal job and engage in informal economic activity or they can apply for welfare and engage in informal economic activity. If one selects the former, one is in a low-wage job with a glass ceiling on upward mobility (personal interview with African American male, 03/08/04). If one selects the latter, one receives the same benefits indefinitely with no chance for upward mobility. Furthermore, informal entrepreneurial practice yields minimal results and/or is illegal. Regardless of which option Linden's residents select, they become relatively class-locked with only small informal opportunities for entrepreneurship.

Welfare dependency does not indicate that these African Americans are inherently lazy and/or ignorant as some racist discourses (i.e. Ronald Reagan's description of "welfare queens") might indicate (O'Connor 1998). Linden's African Americans have proven savvy as they have continued to gain access to welfare despite the 1996 reforms President Bill Clinton made, which place a time limit on the length in which one is allowed access to welfare (O'Connor 2002, personal interview with African American minister, 10/20/04). Furthermore, the desire that many of Linden's African Americans share shows that these African Africans have the requisite motivation but they lack the resources (personal interview with African American male Linden resident, 03/08/04). Many in Linden's African American population would rather work for their money.

Until recently, only single-parent households could obtain welfare (Gillon 2000). Therefore, if the mother and the father of a child need welfare to provide for their child, then the mother or father will have to move out. This policy established a trend of single-parent households in low-income African American communities that led to the fragmentation of the African American household and, subsequently, the community at large. As a result, even if the

[6] Indeed, most of Linden's residents that I spoke with about this matter are eligible for welfare because if they were not impoverished enough to be eligible for the state-sponsored welfare system, they would reside somewhere in the suburbs (personal interview with African American male Linden resident, 02/19/05).

City/NGO complex would offer African Americans access to start-up capital the African American community in Linden would likely fail to capitalize on this opportunity due to the fragmentation evident in their community. This suggests that the City/NGO complex must go above and beyond the policies offered to the Somalis if the City/NGO complex hopes to provide realistic economic hope for Linden's African Americans.

Understanding how this structural racism can affect one black group (African Americans) while leaving another black group relatively unscathed (Somalis) and how Somalis have been able to maintain the social networks necessary for entrepreneurship while African Americans have not requires understanding the role of migratory circumstance. When evaluating the success of a migrant group, it is necessary to evaluate pre- and post-migratory circumstances (Waldinger 1990). Indeed, Somalis have had more entrepreneurial success in the last 10 years than the African Americans have in their history because of the positive pre- and post-migratory circumstances the Somalis have faced. Indeed, the pre-migratory circumstances facing the Somalis that migrated to Columbus are positive: "The Somalis that came to the United States are the elites, the ones capable of escaping Somalia when things began to fall apart, the ones that were already educated and already had built lives. In the United States, we had to rebuild" (personal interview with Somali male community leader, 03/01/04). Many Somalis in Columbus speak at least three languages, have run a business before, and are well educated (a number of them have doctoral degrees) (personal interview with Somali male community leader, 09/13/04).

Post-migratory circumstances are also positive. As already mentioned, Somalis have access to money to begin small businesses. This coupled with the reality that many Somalis already know how to run small businesses makes it clear as to how Somalis are capable of creating and managing over 200 small businesses in Columbus in such a short period of time.

Furthermore, Somalis maintain strong family bonds which mold their community together (focus group with Somali women, 01/24/05). Even when Somali families are spatially separated (either because they live in different cities in the United States or because they have relatives still living in Somalia and in refugee camps in Kenya) they stay connected through phone calls, e-mail (there are a number of Somali-owned internet café's in Columbus and Somalia), letters, and remittances (Winter 2004, participant observation in Somali businesses, focus group with Somali male business owners, 02/12/05). Relative to African Americans, Somalis' pre- and post-migratory circumstances provide them with an advantage to access to capital and to meeting community needs.

Some academicians have claimed that there is not a correlation between an increase in immigration and economic opportunity for domestic marginalized groups such as low-income African Americans (Neal and Bohon 2003). However, this discussion is not relevant to my study. As indicated above, instead of arguing that immigrants are making economic conditions worse for them (African Americans), Linden's African American population is pointing out that they are continually set in a marginalized position while an incoming immigrant groups finds economic growth and success.

The reason African Americans in Linden are engaging in conflict with Somalis is not because of a misunderstanding of Somalis' group-specific behaviors. Nor is the cause an issue of who wins in an economic bout between Somalis and African Americans. As my fieldwork indicates, structural problems are the primary reason Linden's African Americans are engaging in conflict with Somalis. Linden's African Americans face more structural racism (based on the history of racism in which they are a part), are relatively class-locked into the lower-classes (because of welfare dependency), and lack community cohesion (due to the nature of welfare

policy). Meanwhile, as a result of their relatively positive pre- and post-migratory circumstances, Somalis are not facing racism or classism to this degree.

My fieldwork also challenges the city/NGO diagnosis that Somali aggression was retaliation. To the contrary, Somalis fought to reinforce differences between Somalis and African Americans. The reason Somali leadership worked so hard to intentionally exclude African Americans is two fold. First, Somalis were aware of the poor representations associated with being dark-skinned in the United States (personal interview with Somali NGO worker, 10/04/04). Second, Somalis were protecting themselves from potential assimilation into African American culture, which would threaten the long-term sustainability of their ethnic ties (focus group with Somali women, 01/24/05). In refugee camps in Kenya, Somalis were told by community leaders to be aware of lazy "black Americans" before moving to the United States (personal interview with Somali NGO worker, 10/04/04; personal interview with city/NGO official, 02/26/04). As one refugee put it: "Black Americans are lazy, they don't like work, and they are not successful" (personal interview with Somali male new to Linden, 01/07/05). Clearly, these warnings were effective. Therefore, according to my field research, Somali aggression was more of a proactive measure than a retaliatory effort; active discrimination against "blackness" in the United States fueled Somali aggression.

Based on my fieldwork, the city/NGO complex's diagnosis is insufficient. Had the city/NGO complex actively sought the perspective of Somalis and African Americans in Linden, then perhaps the city/NGO complex would have seen that the conflict was more than a misunderstanding of group-specific behaviors and that Somalis were more than retaliating. However, the city/NGO complex did not do this. For this reason, the city/NGO complex failed to make a proper diagnosis.

Assumption: Assimilation is necessary for the resolution of conflict

The city/NGO complex assumed that the conflict would not cease until assimilation eliminated the differences between the two groups (personal interview with city/NGO official, 02/26/04). Such a viewpoint is consistent with a conventional view of immigration. In this view, it is assumed that migrants are cut off from their homeland and are left with no option but to assimilate into the new culture that now surrounds them (Portes 2001). However, little empirical evidence exists to support the immigration-assimilationist model universally (Schiller and Fouron 1999).

Critics of the immigration-assimilationist model point out that many migrants remain connected to their homeland through transnational networks, or the cultural and financial ties that connect a migrant group in a place to their place of origin and/or other nodes of migration along the network (Zhou and Tseng 1999). Migrants belonging to these transnational networks have little reason to assimilate into a local culture on foreign soil. Instead, these migrants have a stake in preserving their culture to maintain their financial lifeline and sustain their cultural ties through which these migrants sculpt and re-sculpt their identities. Therefore, understanding transnationalism rather than migration supports a non-assimilationist perspective.

Whether or not a migrant group is "transnational" or "traditional immigrant" depends on the nature of the migrant group i.e. if the migrant group maintains transnational ties, then the group is "transnational"; if the group is cut off from their homeland, then the group is "traditional immigrant). There are serious consequences when policymakers assume a migrant group is "traditional immigrant" or "transnational" without empirical support for such a claim. The policy implications when one assumes a migrant group to be "traditional immigrant" is assimilationist. However, if this assumption is wrong, then governance will be working counter

to the needs of a falsely labeled transnational migrant group. Effective policy geared towards a transnational migrant group requires that the migrant groups' social space remain uninterrupted. By contrast, effective policy geared towards a traditional immigrant group might indicate that the migrant group's social space be merged with the local social space (depending on the thoughts and feelings of the local group as well as of the migrant group).

The city/NGO complex labeled the Somalis "traditional immigrant" under the presumption that since Somalis fled their native country as refugees, then the Somalis have become disconnected to their homeland (personal interview with city/NGO official, 04/11/05). The assumption is that accepting refugee status indicates a willingness to forgo any connection to one's place of citizenship. Indeed, why would anyone accept refugee status if not facing direct persecution? Further, why would someone facing persecution from their place of citizenship want to remain connected to their place of citizenship?

Although most of the Somalis in the United States left as refugees, this does not imply disconnectedness between the refugees and friends and family in Somalia. Actually, some of the Somalis I interviewed indicated that fear of persecution was not their primary reason for leaving Somalia. They left because they could not find jobs in Somalia and they needed some way to keep their families financially stable and that Somalia was no longer providing jobs (personal interview with Somali male new to Linden, 01/07/05). The political dimension of Somalis' lives actually is the reverse of what the city/NGO complex assumed.

Some of my Somali contacts noted that their family members in Somalia have pleaded with them to return to Somalia because they fear an anti-Muslim sentiment in the post-9/11 United States. Somalis in Somalia fear that their relatives in the United States will face angry

mobs of American citizens and/or false imprisonment under the Patriot Act[7] (focus group with Somali male business owners, 02/12/05). They sense that the political and social climate in the United States is more dangerous for Somalis than the political and social climate in their hometowns in Somalia. This indicates that though Somalia is in turmoil, there are places within Somalia that Somalis deem more safe than the places they inhabit in the United States (evidence to support a point I make later in this paper on the progressive nature of place). This is not to suggest that Somalis have not endured hardship in their native country, or that there was not reason to fear warlords, or that the civil war in Somalia is something to be taken lightly. However, because these safer places within Somalia no longer afford enough economic opportunity to provide adequate sustenance, Somalis have chosen to migrate. In sum, my field research revealed that Somalis are economic refugees determined to preserve their national identity, linkage with family and friends in Somalia, and that they are intent on *not* being assimilated into any social group in the United States.

Since migration, Somalis have effectively maintained their financial and cultural ties to Somalia. All of the Somalis I spoke with send remittances to family members in Somalia. Furthermore, many Somalis view their time in the United States as temporary: "Somalis hope to preserve a bright future for their children, this includes rebuilding Somalia" (personal interview with Somali NGO worker, 10/04/04). By this, the Somali NGO worker means that if Somalia can afford enough economic opportunity to provide adequate sustenance to his family, he would return to Somalia.

[7] This is not a far-fetched fear. On November 28, 2003, a Somali man in Columbus was arrested for his alleged involvement with Al-Qaeda in a supposed plot to plant a bomb in a local mall (Wasserman and Fitrakis 2004). The Patriot Act justified the arrest, and some citizens have since expressed a fear of Somalis (personal interview with Caucasian Columbus citizen, 06/16/04).

It is apparent that Somalis are transnationals and not traditional immigrants as the city/NGO complex suggested. Therefore, implementation of assimilationist policies does not match the needs of the Somali community. Assimilation is unnecessary, is contrary to the goals of the Somali community, and the threat of assimilation is serious enough to cause Somalis to fight. Somalis were willing to engage in conflict with African Americans to avoid assimilation.

Assumption: Groups are homogenous

The city/NGO complex assumed that there were no differences within groups, as evidenced by two points: First, the city/NGO complex believes that assimilation would solve the conflict by bridging the gap between the two communities. Second, the city/NGO complex's assumed that gathering information from the middle-class African Americans and Somali leaders was sufficient. However, others have shown that differences within and between groups exist. Revised postcolonialists have highlighted the multiplicity of voices existing within (Mohanty 1991, Stoler 1989, etc.) and between (Shohat 1988, McClintock 1995, etc.) different dominant and subaltern groups. This attempts to undo the silences of history, regardless of whether these silences are intra- or inter-group.

As mentioned earlier, the community leaders were not directly involved with the fighting and could not speak for their entire community on this matter. There appear to be divisions in the African American community along class lines. Some middle-class African Americans living outside of Linden believe that Linden's low-income African Americans overreacted to the Somali transnationals: "Their [low-income African American] struggle is legitimate, but the fighting is misplaced. We [middle-class African Americans] don't agree with the idea of fighting to get ahead." (personal interview with middle-class African American male, 12/01/04). Meanwhile, Linden's low-income African Americans feel left out of the middle-class

community: "They [African Americans that gain access to capital] move out of their homes to the suburbs. Once they [the new middle-class African Americans] get there, they don't help me out at all." (personal interview with African American male Linden resident, 02/19/05). Clearly, between-class divisions exist within the African American community in Columbus.

Further, the low-income African American community in Linden is fragmented. As one African American inner-city school counselor mentioned, "We have to get over the fact that our community is not well connected, I don't think that will ever be fixed. We have to move on" (personal interview with African American Linden school counselor, 03/09/05). The following anecdote demonstrates this point well:

> "I had a[n African American] parent in here [school counselor's office] last week to fill out a FAFSA[8] form for her exceptionally bright daughter. The parent refused to fill out the FAFSA form saying, 'I didn't get a chance to go to college, why should she?'" (personal interview with African American Linden school counselor, 03/09/05).

Within community difference and fragmentation such as this makes it difficult to assess a community-specific issue without directly consulting those involved. More evidence for this comes from my participant observation, where the brevity of African American interactions with one another (especially in comparison to the more cohesive Somali community) in places of business seems to indicate that the African American community in Linden is fragmented.

Although more cohesive, the Somali community also have some rifts within their community. Most noticeable are differences along lines of gender and generation. A majority of the Somali men (and all five male Somali community leaders[9]) that I interviewed cite the primary concern of the Somali community as generating access to capital. However, Somali women (and the only female community leader) that I interviewed cite two different concerns:

[8] The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is a form that allows prospective and current college students in the United States to apply for grants and low-interest loans.
[9] I spoke to six Somali Community leaders while conducting fieldwork. Five were men and one was a woman.

access to childcare and healthcare (especially psychological health as some of the Somali women in Columbus were subjected to rape and other forms of torture in Somalia). This concern about childcare is centered on the idea that "We [Somali women] don't want our kids to be corrupted by their [African American] kids" (focus group with Somali women, 01/24/05). Furthermore, "the fact that some Somalis are wearing FUBU[10] is making [Somali] parents nervous" (personal interview with Somali NGO worker, 09/17/04).

This "corruption" of the Somali youth highlights the generational gap that appears to be forming. Although Somalis hope to sustain their culture, some of their children are growing apathetic toward this goal (as the change in their clothing style indicates). Not all Somali children share this apathy however: "The Somali girls are taking their own paths to understanding themselves. In school, some wear the veil; others wear the veil with some more tight-fitting gowns than their traditional garb; and others dress just like the African American girls" (personal interview with African American Linden school counselor, 03/09/04). Thus, it would appear that although the Somalis fit the "transnational" mold, the next generation will feature some Somali-Americans and some Somali transnationals. Though the goal of sustainable cultural ties to Somalia is not lost with the existence of some Somali children rebelling against tradition, some first-generation Somalis are nervous.

Assumption: Conventional views of place

The city/NGO complex assumed that place is homogenous and spatially bound, that is, that a place has—and should have—a singular cultural identity. This singular identity represents all people in the place, is unchanged, and is defined without influence from other places. In this

[10] FUBU is a brand of clothing predominantly worn by African Americans (but not exclusively African American as FUBU operates in 15 countries) (Chappell 1999). FUBU is also an acronym that means "For Us by Us" (us refers to African Americans) (Chappell 1999). The company, created and owned by four African American males, got its start in 1992 (Chappell 1999). Somali children discarding traditional garb in favor of FUBU is what is making Somali parents nervous.

view, places are discrete and disconnected from other places. Such a view is consistent with a conventional view of place.

Alternatively, a "progressive sense of place" argues that places are diverse, bustling with difference and power relations, dynamic, and unbound (Massey 1993). A place has multiple, changing identities because it has multiple, changing people. People have multiple identities because they have different connections outside of this place and because they might not be fully connected inside the place (each person's within-place social network looks different). Therefore, place is dependent of other places as there is interconnectedness between what a person is exposed to both within a place and outside of that place. Furthermore, processes affecting the people in the place change the identity of that place. These processes happen at various scales and in various places. In short, there is a strong relationship between space and place that the conventional view fails to recognize.

To concretize this idea using Linden as the case study, let us take a look at how it is that the city/NGO complex subscribes to a conventional view and how this fails to measure up to the reality of place. Evidence that the city/NGO complex subscribes to a conventional view of place is found in their general attitude toward the conflict. City/NGO complex officials view the conflict as intrinsic to Linden. Arguing that the cause of the conflict is a misunderstanding of group-specific behaviors presumes that the cause of the conflict is intrinsic to the two communities. Such a view eliminates the possibility that processes beyond the neighborhood might contribute to conditions conducive to conflict.

A number of city-wide, nation-wide, and international processes have affected Linden and have led to the conditions for fighting. To cite several examples (some of which I have already mentioned in this paper): At the city scale, local NGOs providing access to capital for

Somalis and not African Americans based on Somalis' refugee status is a local process that contributed to African Americans' frustrations, similarly the assimilationist discourse that the city/NGO complex adopted has given the Somalis good reason to hold their ground. At the national scale, the welfare policies have locked many low-income African American communities into a state of welfare dependency. It is this same dependency that has created a community of frustrated low-income African Americans in Linden. At the international scale, the process of transnationalism has given the Somali community a relative economic advantage: the ability to mobilize capital across international boundaries. Such an advantage has magnified the entrepreneurial success of the Somali community. This success, as discussed earlier, varies directly with African American frustration. It would appear that processes have played a major role in creating conditions conducive to conflict in Linden.

Further evidence that the city/NGO complex subscribes to a conventional view of place can be seen in how the city/NGO complex believes assimilation is necessary. The conventional, spatially restricted view of place is consistent with the traditional model of immigration and, relatedly, the normative subscription to assimilation. The city/NGO complex views Linden as a place in some sort of cognitive dissonance, as if this neighborhood is schizophrenically divided into a duality: Somali vs. African American identity. The city/NGO complex believes that assimilation provides a solution to this cognitive dissonance. Only after assimilation will things settle into the necessary single identity, as if this sort of equilibrium necessitates peace. Such a territorial understanding fails to recognize that dualities and pluralities[11] can (and indeed do) exist everywhere at all scales, and, importantly, are likely to persist.

[11] though absent from this analysis there are more than African Americans and Somalis in Linden and once one factors in their perspectives and an understanding that differences within groups exist, one quickly comes to understand that plurality, not duality, is present in Linden.

And what is the consequence when governance subscribes to a conventional view of place? In this case the consequence was that Somalis and African Americans became spatially proximate as the city/NGO complex assumed (based on racial and spatial homogenization) that such proximity would create the necessary conditions for assimilation. Indeed, NGOs intentionally resettled Somalis in African American neighborhoods because of racial homogenization (Personal interview with city/NGO official, 01/21/04). City/NGO complex officials assumed that Somalis should be located in a place that is most familiar, and clearly (from their perspective) this is in the predominantly low-income African American neighborhood and not the predominantly low-income Latin American, Caucasian, or other ethnicity in Columbus[12]. Spatial homogenization then occurred as the city/NGO complex applied a conventional view of place to Linden (thus the surprised response of the City/NGO complex indicated in the quote "They live in the same neighborhood. They share the same skin color. They were expected to get along. But they didn't"). Clearly, the city/NGO discourse of homogenization and conventional views of place led Somalis into the predominantly African American neighborhoods where the conflict began[13].

The lack of a plural or progressive sense of history, immigration, identity, and place led to the city/NGO complex's incapability to listen to the concerns of the Somalis and African Americans. The result was a misdiagnosis of the causes of conflict as well as policy that exacerbated the conflict.

A new democracy

[12] Since the city/NGO complex resettled the Somalis in public housing projects through the Section 8 voucher program, Somalis had to be resettled in a low-income area (the only public housing facilities are in low-income places), thus putting a residential burden on an already marginalized group (interview with African American minister, 10/20/04).

[13] This is not a defense of segregation, but rather an argument for more progressive understandings of place. Had the city/NGO complex recognized that heterogeneity was possible within a place, the city/NGO complex could have seen differences within the two communities. This would have wiped out the city/NGO complex's apparent "surprise" by the conflict and could have rendered them more capable of prescribing effective policy.

The aggregative model

As a result of the nature of top-down governance, the city/NGO complex implemented their plans to "promote peace" with inadequate consultation of Somalis or African Americans, and this framework informed policy implementation. It has been shown that such a system is fundamentally incapable of representing the needs of marginalized communities because the marginalized have no voice (Kleniewski 1984).

To understand the changes necessary to prevent governing structures from misdiagnosing important problems, I turn to the literatures on radical democracy. Radical democracy begins with an understanding of the limitations of the current aggregative model of democracy that is accepted in public policy discourse. In this model, voting rights define the basis of democracy whereby democracy becomes an event and citizenship focuses on a set of rights, duties, and responsibilities accorded to individuals by a constitution.

Habermasian democracy

Habermas (1996) proposed a new, deliberative approach to democratic practice as the solution to the problem of exclusiveness. Instead of being viewed as an annual event, in the Habermasian model democracy is a process focused on participation. The issue in this model is what groups of people within communities want. The way this model is implemented is through public deliberation in which communities of people play an active role. Here, deliberation is seen as the method to undermine the structural problems of aggregative democracy.

Although the Habermasian model of democracy offers a bottom-up alternative to the aggregative model and is better than the existing top-down structure, it does not address all the issues facing the current system. For example, revised postcolonialism and my fieldwork indicate

a need for unity, but not homogeneity within and between groups (Lorde 1984, hooks[14] 1984) which both argue for unity and not homogeneity within and between groups) and my field of research (which highlights the danger of homogeneity). The point that the Habermasian model fails to recognize is that differences within and between groups are realities. Instead of attempting to suppress them, my fieldwork and revised postcolonialism express the need to have a democratic system of governance that recognizes difference in this manner[15].

Post-Habermasian democracy

A second, more complete alternative is found in Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) foundational outline of a Post-Habermasian model of democracy. Iris Young (1990) discusses the model more concretely[16]. The Post-Habermasian model extends the Habermasian model by recognizing a plurality and multiplicity of voices within and between communities. Young's model advocates a respect and appreciation of these differences through what Young terms "together-in-difference" (Young 1999). Young argues that discrimination along axes of difference within and between groups needs to be dealt with. Instead of being indiscriminate whereby policy would focus on equal treatment and/or integrated unity, Young argues that different people have different likelihoods of gaining access to their specific needs (which varies

[14] Although bell hooks' work is categorized as feminist, here she can be viewed as a revised postcolonialist as well as this article focuses on methods of generating political solidarity between different groups of women to provide inclusion to women as women can be thought of as a subaltern group when focusing on a predominantly male hegemony.

[15] Although the postcolonial literature does inform my research, this point on difference brings up a notable limitation. Although revised postcolonial literatures discuss difference is such a progressive manner, these literatures are critical of nationalism. National identity, according to many revised postcolonialists, is necessarily exclusive and promotes a homogenized sense of 'the nation' (McClintock 1995, Shohat 1988, Nixon 1983, etc.). Although this is true in the cases mentioned by the authors, it assumes that nationalism is essentially bad in all contexts and should therefore be eliminated. Such thoughts on national identity run counter to the nature of revised postcolonialism. Nationalism is another axis of difference, and the legitimacy of this axis should not be universally challenged. Indeed, Somalis in Columbus embrace their national identity to help strengthen their transnational financial and cultural ties (personal interview with Somali male, 02/22/04).

[16] Indeed, all of Young's arguments that I highlight here seem to be concretized reflections of what Laclau and Mouffe call an "agonistic" model (1985).

from group to group and from person to person). Young's framework calls for differences to be highlighted. Instead of highlighting difference for the sake of discrimination (as the city/NGO complex assumes is the consequence of the existence of difference – thus the need to eliminate it), difference is highlighted for the sake of together-in-difference (personal interview with city/NGO official, 04/11/05).

By focusing on deliberation and together-in-difference, this Post-Habermasian model adequately answers the issues that postcolonial theorists and my fieldwork pose. However, such changes are difficult, but are possible (Dagnino 1998). Theorizing the necessary conditions and viability for such change is beyond the scope of this paper in its current form and would require a thorough reading of the literatures on social activism[17].

How the Post-Habermasian model might work

In such a system of inclusive governance, no one person should decide how things should work (which is why I chose the word "might" in the subheading, not "should" or "will"). For this reason, nothing I write in this section is to be taken as *the* way that the Post-Habermasian model should be implemented. Rather, this is simply one way in which it might work.

Let us begin with a situation that the local system of aggregative governance did not respond well to: Somalis migrating to Columbus. To recap, Somalis moved to Columbus and were led to Linden based on assumptions of racial homogenization without adequate consultation of Somali immigrants or Linden's African American residents. The key difference between what aggregative governance permitted and what Post-Habermasian governance would not permit is that decisions were made without adequate consultation.

[17] Although this beyond the scope of this paper in its current form, I hope to incorporate this more in the publishable draft. Thinking about how I might theorize the plausibility of and conditions necessary for post-Habermasian radical democracy did not cross my mind until recently, and so I did not have time to adequately incorporate it into this paper.

The question, then, is: What could one do to make certain all potentially affected communities had the opportunity to be included in decision making processes? One way to begin such a process could be focus groups. In this case, Somalis want to move to Columbus. Let us assume that the easiest method to relocate Somalis is via the public housing system. The first round of focus groups should focus on Somalis (do they want to live in the public housing facilities? What are their pros/cons? How might the cons be dealt with?), current public housing residents (Would they mind living near these Somalis? What are their concerns?), public housing officials (Are there an adequate number of units to support the incoming community and the current residents?). Again, to adequately consult each of these groups, multiple focus groups must be conducted with different people within a group (i.e. focus groups with Somalis of certain ages, all female Somalis, all male Somalis, Somalis of different family clans, Somalis in general, etc.). A second round of focus groups might inter-mix groups (i.e. some Somalis and some public housing residents might be brought together to discuss specific community goals, expectations[18], measures of compatibility, and discussions of specific group differences). Furthermore, participants in each focus group should be randomly selected, and once selected, the focus group should not be held until all participants decide on a time that works for everybody.

Let us assume that these focus groups highlighted Linden as the best place for Somalis given everyone's thoughts and feelings on the issue (though, this would be unlikely given my findings that Somalis were attempting to intentionally avoid "black Americans). The Somalis would then locate in Linden. However, the focus groups would not end there. As the Somalis settle in to their new surroundings, focus groups would continue to see what negative thoughts

[18] This may sound similar to Project Brotherhood, which I criticized. However, I criticized Project Brotherhood for being insufficient, not being necessarily wrong.

and feelings there might be, what the source of such thoughts and feelings are, and how these thoughts and feelings might be dealt with. For example, as the Somalis grew incubator business, Linden's African Americans became frustrated. Instead of being caught by surprise (as the city/NGO complex was), this system of governance would be capable of identifying the potential problem before actions reach the point of fighting and could then work on solutions to the problem. This way, policy-making decision structures are capable of adjusting to needs as they arise. All implemented policies would arise from discussions between within and between these groups, and none of these policies would be "set in stone" in a place or be universally applicable[19]. In such a system, local governance would not be able to operate off the assumptions that the city/NGO complex made (as members of potentially affected communities would be consulted) and African Americans and Somalis would have their voices included in policy making and implementation, and would be able to coexist together-in-difference.

Conclusion

This paper has provided an overview of the conflict in Linden between Somalis and African Americans. In doing so, it highlighted the city/NGO complex's perspective of the conflict, and the assumptions associated with such a perspective: that the conflict was a result of misunderstandings of group-specific behaviors, that assimilation would inevitably solve the problem, and that groups and place are homogenous. From there, findings from the field were used to introduce the perspectives of African Americans and Somalis. This highlighted the one-dimensionality of the city/NGO discourse and the multidimensional reality of the conflict; thus highlighting the dangers of using a one-dimensional discourse to diagnose problems and

[19] Unlike the welfare policy that has (in part) led to Linden's fragmented African American community. The reason welfare policy required a household to be single-parent is that in its original form, the policy was designed to help widows take care of their children (Gillon 2000). Obviously, such a policy should not have been applied "as is" to Linden's African Americans.

prescribe solutions. Furthermore, such an understanding empirically grounds revised postcolonial theory.

Then, given these postcolonial realities, two theoretical models of democracy were explored to replace the problematic aggregative model. A Habermasian model was then discussed. Although better than the top-down aggregative model, the Habermasian model was still incomplete. A third, Post-Habermasian model was decided as ideal as it considers the need for deliberation and understands differences within and between groups.

Lastly, how the Post-Habermasian model of democracy might work was explored. The idea is that focus groups might be used to preemptively find solutions to problems before they escalate into conflict. If implemented, such a concept might overcome the failures of the current top-down system of governance.

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